Fund for agricultural research

†1941. SHRI MANGANI LAL MANDAL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state.

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have taken a decision for optimum modernisation and strengthening of agriculture on the basis of scientific researches and its outcome in the field of agricultural development;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government have taken a decision to create a national fund for agricultural research; and

(c) if so, the action taken in this regard, so far, alongwith the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Scheme 'National Fund for Agricultural Research' has been approved. An empowered Committee under Dr. C.N.R. Rao has been constituted to approve the Projects under this Fund. The first meeting of this empowered Committee is scheduled for 23rd March, 2006.

Wastage of crop during harvesting and marketing

†1942. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that major part of the crops of farmers, constituting about 65 per cent of our population in the country, engaged in agriculture sector goes waste during the process of harvesting and taking the crop to the market;

(b) whether it is also a fact that no provision for its prevention has been made in any of the budgets;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) In a study conducted by the Directorate of Marketing & Inspection post-harvest losses at producers' level have been estimated to be varying from 1.79 to 7.14 per cent for foodgrains and pulses and from 16.35 to 30.00 per cent in the case of fruits and vegetables. The wastage depends on nature of produce, its shelf life, mode of transportation, packaging, processing, distance from the market, availability of infrastructure facilities like rural godowns and cold storage etc.

(b) to (d) The Government has taken the following step to reduce post-harvest losses in the country:

Indian Council of Agricultural Research has been developing new techniques/systems to minimize the losses in agricultural produce in the country through the Central Institute of Post Harvest Engineering & Technology, Ludhiana and the All India Coordinated Research Project on Post Harvest Technology. The All India Coordinated Research Project on Post Harvest Technology has 33 co-operative centres located throughout the country to develop regionally differentiated post harvest technology packages for crop, livestock product and fisheries produce in terms of reducing post harvest losses, aiding value to the main produce and byproducts.

National Horticulture Board, and autonomous body under this Ministry is implementing programmes to reduce post harvest losses by providing investment subsidy on the capital cost of infrastructure projects for post-harvest handling, processing and marketing of horticulture produce. The rate of subsidy is 20 percent of the project cost with a maximum limit of Rs. 25 lakh per project.

The Department is also implementing schemes for construction/ modernization of Cold Storage and Rural godowns in the country with a view to provide scientific storage facilities to farmers. Under these schemes, subsidy is provided @ 15 to 25% of capital cost of the storage project in general and @ 33.33 percent in case of North Eastern States, hilly areas and Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes entrepreneurs. The main aim of the schemes is to create facilities for scientific storage so that wastage and produce deterioration are minimized.